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INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6065
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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7236
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4501
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1769
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1798
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3981
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4402
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8971
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SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY BRAWL OVER RULES OF DEBATE

Classified By: Amb. David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Stalemate over the rules of order for the Constituent Assembly (CA) escalated into violence late August 31 and continued into the early morning of September 1 in Sucre. Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) delegates hardened their position on a simple majority vote (the opposition supports two-thirds) on constitutional changes, marching lockstep in support of their position. Because of the impasse, Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera went to Sucre. The vice president's arrival was blocked by local residents engaged in an unrelated demonstration which initially prevented his helicopter from landing. As Garcia Linera approached the Assembly on foot, police restrained protesters who met him with catcalls. Around the same time, local residents physically assaulted Assembly representatives emerging from session. Angry Assembly delegates, claiming that "anti-indigenous" Sucreno racism was making deliberations impossible, called for increased security and demanded that the Assembly be moved to Cochabamba.

¶2. (SBU) Later in the day, MAS delegates presented their still-incomplete rules of order to the plenary. These rules provide for a simple majority vote on all measures. Assembly President Silvia Lazarte began to read them into the record. Podemos delegates threw plastic water bottles at the Assembly directive in an attempt to stop the reading. MAS representatives then entered into a physical struggle with opposition representatives. Amidst this confusion, MAS party leader Ramon Loaiza fell approximately three meters from the stage into the orchestra pit. Loaiza is in critical condition in a Sucre hospital, where he reportedly suffers from a cerebral hemorrhage and respiratory problems. After his fall, MAS representatives approved their version of the rules; Podemos, MNR, UN and other opposition parties abandoned the session around 5 a.m. September 1.

¶3. (C) Comment: Television images we've seen of last night's fracas at the CA reveal a brawl more appropriate for a Wild West saloon than a constitutional convention. While fisticuffs were apparently exchanged, and one representative waved around a bloodied elbow, the situation really got out of hand when Loaiza fell. He may well die. Should he do so, the MAS will certainly turn him into a martyr. With as yet

no video of Loaiza,s fall released to the public, its circumstances remain unclear. While last night's violence represents a new low mark for the Constituent Assembly, it is unsurprising given the rough and tumble atmosphere which prevails in Sucre today.

14. (C) Comment continued: The MAS has been upping the pressure on the CA since its opening days, importing demonstrators and street protesters to intimidate the assembly through street pressure, harassing the opposition, and generally pushing confrontation over compromise. Over the past 48 hours, the situation in Sucre has degenerated to the verge of chaos. This unraveling could easily be turned to the advantage of the MAS, with MAS delegates blaming anti-MAS actions in the street on anti-indigenous racism, a neuralgic subject with the indigenous population. In any event, we can expect further inflammatory rhetoric, more polarization, and increasing MAS efforts to provoke and marginalize the opposition. End comment.
GREENLEE